



Super Bowl journey ends man's freedom

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Hours after attending the Super Bowl and watching it decided on a last-second turnover, Francisco Rodriguez saw his 10 years on the run end on an interception — by law officers.

Rodriguez, 43, described as a midlevel cocaine-trafficker, was wearing a Super Bowl XXXIX jacket early Feb. 7 when federal marshals pulled him off a private Mexico-bound plane that stopped to refuel in San Antonio after returning from pro football's big show in Jacksonville, Fla.

"He was completely surprised he got caught," Deputy U.S. Marshal Timothy Hughes said. "At least he was warm in jail."

The shock apparently hadn't settled in this week.

At a hearing Monday in San Antonio federal court, Rodriguez, a fugitive for almost a decade — accompanied by four lawyers he hired — sat in disbelief opposite Pete Carlson and Cal Fowler, two of the San Antonio police detectives who busted him 10 years ago.

"Yes," Rodriguez answered in Spanish, acknowledging that he was the same person described in the 1995 court and bond paperwork.

Rodriguez last was in federal custody in October 1995, when police raided a home he allegedly rented and found almost 5 kilograms of cocaine.

Shortly after his arrest, U.S. Magistrate Judge Nancy Nowak granted him release on \$100,000 bond, provided he pay 10 percent of that and that he stay at a halfway house.

But on Nov. 7, 1995, he left the halfway house, Assistant U.S. Attorney Priscilla Garcia told the judge.

This time around, Nowak told Rodriguez there were no conditions she could free him under to ensure his return to court. The judge revoked his bond and sent him back to federal custody. No trial date has been set.

He faces five to 40 years in prison if convicted on the charges of possessing cocaine with intent to distribute.

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